Glimpses of Shi'ism in the Musnad of Ibn Hanbal

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Abstract

Abu 'Abdillāh Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Hanbal Shaybānī (166-241 AH/780-855 CE) [1] is the founder of one of the four schools of Sunni jurisprudence and his book al-Musnad [2] is considered among the most comprehensive and early collections of hadīth. It contains some 30,000 sayings attributed to the Prophet and the period of its writing makes it among the foremost of the sihāh al-sittah (six authentic books) of the Sunni sect. One of the characteristics of this work is the wide space given to hadīth concerning the merits of the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt, most of which are confirmed from the viewpoint of Shi'ite Muslims as well. Compared to the other hadīth compendiums of the Sunnis, the Musnad's emphasis on this subject is so pronounced that it has attracted the attention of orientalists and other researchers. The writer of this article has attempted to focus on this particular point of the Musnad and its author by selecting some of the hadīth mentioned in this bulky compendium with a short explanation wherever necessary.

The key words of this brief article are Tashayyu', Ibn Hanbal, Musnad, Hadīth Compendiums, Merits of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), Hadīth al-Ghadīr, Hadīth al-Thaqalayn, Hadīth al-Manzilah.

Notes:
[1] He is popularly known as Ibn Hanbal. Born in Baghdad or in Merv in Khurāsān (presently the city is in the Republic of Turkmenistan), he started learning hadith at the age of 16 and travelled to different places in collecting from scholars the sayings attributed to Prophet Muhammad (S). Among his prominent teachers, mention could be made of Sufyān bin 'Uyaynah, 'Abd al-Razzāq bin Hammām al-San'ānī and Muhammad bin Idrīs al-Shāfi'ī. He left behind many works, the most famous of which is the hadith compendium titled al-Musnad. His biographers have credited him with such characteristics as sharp memory, patience, purity of heart and thought, sincerity, courage and intellect. For further familiarity on his life, viewpoints and bases of thought, refer to the contemporary Egyptian scholar Shaykh Muhammad Abu Zuhrah's work titled: Ibn Hanbal – Hayātuhu wa 'Asruhu, Arā'uhu wa Fiqhuh (Ibn Hanbal – His Life and Times, His Views and His Fiqh), Egypt, Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1367 AH/1947 CE.
[2] Musnad (pl. Masānīd) is the name given to works where the hadith are arranged in order of the names of the companions who after the Prophet are regarded as the prime source by the Sunnis. Several books were compiled under this title, of which Ahmad bin Hanbal's Musnad is the most famous one.

Introduction

The Musnad of Ibn Hanbal is probably the first of the six books of hadīth considered authentic by Sunni Muslims, since its author died 15 years before the death of the senior-most of the six hadīth compilers, Muhammad bin Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī (d. 256 AH), and 62 years before the last of them, Ahmad bin Shu'ayb al-Nasā'ī, passed away (303 AH). Throughout history, Sunni scholars have attached great importance to Ibn Hanbal's Musnad and eulogized it. Hāfiz Abu Musā Madyanī (581 AH), writes:

This book is a great source and a reliable reference work for researchers of hadīth. The author has selected from the bulky hadīth literature, a large number of narrations to serve as guidelines and support for the people so that when differences arise they take refuge in them and cite them as authentic. [3]

Shams al-Dīn Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Dhahabī (748 AH) writes:

> This book focuses on the hadīth of the Prophet. There are very few hadīth not included (in this collection) whose authenticity has been confirmed...One of the fortunate things about the Musnad is that we find very few hadīth which are considered inauthentic. [4]

Ibn al-Jazarī (833 AH) is even more ecstatic about Ibn Hanbal's Musnad, and says:

> On the face of the earth no better book of hadīth has been compiled. [5]

Ibn Hajar al-'Asqalānī writes in Tajrīd Zawā'id al-Musnad al-Bazzāz:

> If a hadīth is mentioned in Musnad Ibn Hanbal, other Masānīd are not cited for its sources.

Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyutī (849-911 AH) [6] says:

> Even the weak hadīth found in it are near to hasan (fair). [7]

Although these expressions are a clear exaggeration, they nonetheless confirm the importance of this book for the Sunnis. In the light of historical accounts, it was a habit among the Sunnis of the past to recite this book in the presence of scholars of hadīth, and at times such a recitation would be held in a sacred place. For instance, during the first half of the 9th century AH, Ibn Hanbal's Musnad was recited in the presence of Shams al-Dīn Muhammad bin Muhammad al-Jazarī in the Masjid al-Harām of Mecca with the last session ending in the month of Rabī' al-Awwal 828 AH.[8] It is also reported that during the 12th century AH (18th century CE), a group of pious Sunnis gathered in the Prophet's Mosque in Medina to recite Ibn Hanbal's Musnad in 56 sessions.[9]

However, the most outstanding characteristic of the Musnad is that it contains several eyecatching hadīth on the merits of the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt ('a), whereas most of the compilers of the other masānīd, sihāh and sunan, have either ignored these ahādīth or related only a few of them. Ibn Hanbal got into trouble with the authorities for having related these ahādīth on the merits of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and his house was searched on the orders of the 'Abbāsid caliph Mutawakkil on suspicion of supporting the Alawid cause.[10]

It is a well known fact that Ahmad bin Shu'ayb al-Nasā'ī, the last of the six Sunni compilers of the sihāh al-sittah, relied on Ahmad bin Hanbal's narrations for writing his excellent work titled Khasā'is Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'Alī bin Abī Tālib ('a).[11] In short, the Musnad contains narrations, many of which are considered authentic from the Shi'ite point of view. These are so pronounced when compared to the other Sunni collections of hadīth that orientalists and researchers have attempted to investigate the cause, and after drawing a comparison between Ahmad bin Hanbal and his contemporary compilers of the sihāh al-sittah, have come to the conclusion that Muhammad bin Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī and Muslim bin Hajjāj al-Qushayrī, for fear of the 'Abbāsids, left out these ahādīth but since Ahmad was courageous he showed no fear in relating the ahādīth on the merits of Imam 'Alī ('a) and the Ahl al-Bayt ('a).[12]

Ibn Hanbal did not confine the merits of the Prophet's Ahl al-Bayt ('a) to his book, but whenever necessary he opened his mouth to speak about these virtues. Despite the fact that he held all the companions of the Prophet in great esteem and considered those who cursed them to be outside the pale of Islam,[[13]] he strongly defended the superiority of the Prophet's immediate family against their enemies, especially against Mutawakkil who left no stone unturned in his enmity to the Ahl al-Bayt ('a). His son 'Abdullāh bin Ahmad relates:

> Once, when I was sitting with my father, a group of the people of Karkh (a locality of Baghdad) came and started a discussion on the caliphate of Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān and (Imam) 'Alī [('a)]. My father raised his head and facing them said:
>
> > O people, you have said enough concerning (Imam) 'Alī [('a)] and the caliphate. Be informed that the caliphate did not embellish (Imam) 'Alī [('a)] but it was (Imam) 'Alī [('a)] who embellished the caliphate.

Ibn Abī al-Hadīd Mu'tazilī (d. 655 AH), commenting on the above remarks of Ahmad bin Hanbal says:

The meaning of this statement is that the other caliphs adorned themselves with the caliphate and the caliphate covered their flaws, but there was no shortcoming or deficiency in (Imam) ‘Alī [(‘a)] to be made up by the caliphate.[15]

‘Abdullāh bin Ahmad bin Hanbal also quotes his father as saying:

No narration with genuine isnād (chain of authority) has been related on the merits of anyone else (of the companions), as in the case of (Imam) ‘Alī [(‘a)].[16]

He further states:

I asked my father what credence he had concerning the preferential merits of the companions? He replied:

In the matter of caliphate, Abū Bakr, ‘Umar and ‘Uthmān are superior to all others.

I asked him what about (Imam) ‘Alī [(‘a)]? He answered:

O my son! (Imam) ‘Alī bin Abī Tālib [(‘a)] is from a family concerning whom (whose merits) no one can deliberate.[17]

One of the students of Ibn Hanbal narrates:

We were in the presence of Ahmad bin Hanbal when a person asked:

O Abā ‘Abdillāh! What is your opinion about the hadīth which says that (Imam) ‘Alī (‘a) stated:

“I am the distributor of hell?”

Ibn Hanbal replied:

From what aspect do you doubt its credence? Has it not been related that the Prophet told (Imam) ‘Alī (‘a):

“None will love you but the faithful believer and none will hate you but the hypocrite?”

We said:

Yes.

He asked:

Where is the place of the faithful believer?

“In paradise”,

we answered.

He asked:

Where is the place of the hypocrite?

“In hell”,

we replied.

He said:

Ali is thus the distributor of hell.[18]

Ibn Hanbal’s belief thus bears close resemblance to that of his teacher, Shāfi‘ī, who also recorded the merits and virtues of Imam ‘Alī (‘a) and his descendants and considered himself their devotee. When Ibn Hanbal was asked about the battle between Imam ‘Alī (‘a) and Mu‘āwiyah bin Abī Sufyān, he said regarding them he knew nothing

but good,[19] but added that in the field of jurisprudential studies he found Imam ‘Alī (‘a) to be linked to the truth. For instance, when in his presence Shāfi‘ī was accused of tashayyu for listing Imam ‘Alī’s (‘a) battles with Mu‘āwiyah and the Khawārij under the rules of transgressors, he replied that among the companions of the Prophet, Imam ‘Alī (‘a) was the first leader who had to deal with the sedition and revolt of opponents.

This reply makes it clear that Shāfi‘ī’s categorizing of the battles between Imam ‘Alī (‘a) and Mu‘āwiyah under rules for transgressors, does not expose him to the fault-finding of his critics. In fact, for any fair observor, the verdict between Shāfi‘ī and his critics is that Mu‘āwiyah was a transgressor, as could be further confirmed by the famous saying of the Prophet to his companion ‘Ammār bin Yāsir: “taqtuluka al-fi’ah al-bāghiyah” (you will be killed by a party of transgressors).[20] No one can deny that ‘Ammār, while fighting on the side of Imam ‘Alī (‘a), was killed by the forces of Mu‘āwiyah during one of the battles of the Siffīn War, and thus in the light of this hadīth, beyond an iota of doubt, Mu‘āwiyah is a transgressor.[21]

Ibn Hanbal was a contemporary of four of the infallible Imams of the Prophet’s Household – Imam Musā al-Kāzim (‘a), Imam ‘Alī bin Musā al-Rizā (‘a), Imam Muhammad al-Jawād (‘a) and Imam ‘Alī al-Hādī (‘a). The author of Rawzāt al-Jannāt relates on the authority of Daylamī’s Irshād al-Qulub that Ahmad bin Hanbal was a student of Imam al-Kāzim (‘a).[22] Shaykh al-Tā’ifah Tusī considers him among the students of Imam al-Rizā (‘a).[23] A contemporary researcher pointing out Ibn Hanbal’s links with Imāmī scholars, writes that he studied under many of those known to be followers of the school of Imam Ja‘far al-Sādiq (‘a), and for this reason he has often been criticised by the enemies of the Shi‘ites.[24]

In view of the above facts it could be said that since Ahmad bin Hanbal was under the influence of the Infallible Imams (‘a) or their disciples or that he had a spirit of courage and fair-mindedness, he did not hesitate to include in his Musnad many of the hadīth on the virtues and merits of the Ahl al-Bayt (‘a). These hadīth are so eye-catching that one of the contemporary scholars has collected them in an exclusive work titled Musnad al-Manāqib.[25]

In this article the writer has selected some hadīth from the Musnad and highlighted them with brief explanations.

Notes:

[3] Abu Musā al-Madyanī, Khasā’is al-Musnad (This treatise has been published at the beginning of Ibn Hanbal’s Musnad by Ahmad Muhammad Shākir), p. 21.
[4] Al-Jazarī, Muhammad bin Muhammad, al-Mus‘ad al-Ahmad fī Khatm-i Musnad al-Imam Ahmad, p. 39. This treatise has also been included by Shākir in his introduction to the Musnad.
[5] Ibid, p. 28.
[6] Al-Suyutī, Jalāl al-Dīn, Jāmi‘ al-Ahādīth, compiled and arranged by ‘Abbās Ahmad Saqar and Ahmad ‘Abd al-Jawād, pulished in 21 volumes by Dār al-Fikr, Beirut, 1994.
[7] Hasan or fair, according to Sunni traditionists is the term used to classify a hadith which is traced to the Prophet or his companions or the second generation of Muslims, on the authority (sanad) of a person of short memory but considered reliable. This type of hadith is also free of shādh, which means a tradition of reliable isnād but contrary to another similarly attested tradition.
[8] Ibn al-Jazarī, al-Mus‘ad al-Ahmad fī khatm Musnad al-Imam Ahmad, pp. 53-55.
[9] Al-Murādī, Silk al-Durar, vol. 4, p. 160
[10] On Ibn Hanbal’s accusation of support for the Alawids refer to Abu al-Faraj ‘Abd al-Rahmān bin ‘Alī bin al-Jawzī’s Manāqib al-Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal with a foreword by ‘Adil Nuwayhiz, Dār al-Afāq al-Jadīdah Publishers, Beirut, pp. 359-362, 1973.
[11] This work brought about the death of al-Nasā’ī. It is said that when on a trip to Damascus he found the people of Syria ignorant of the lofty personality of Imam ‘Alī (‘a), he decided to write a book on the merits of the Commander of the Faithful. When al-Nasā’ī started reading his work from the pulpit of the Mosque of Damascus, the enemies of the Prophet’s Household pulled him down and beat him so severely that he succumbed to his injuries in Palestine.
[12] Ahmad Amīn, Zuhā al-Islām, 6th edition, vol, 2, pp. 122-123, published by Maktabah al-Nihzat al-Misriyyah, 1961.
[13] Ibn al-Jawzī, Manāqib al-Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, p. 165.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibn Abī al-Hadīd, Sharh Nahj al-Balāghah, vol. 1, p. 17.
[16] Ibn al-Jawzī, Manāqib al-Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, p. 163.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Abu al-Husayn Muhammad bin Abī Ya‘lā, Tabaqat al-Hanābilah, vol. 1, p. 320, edited by Muhammad Hāmid al-Faqī, Cairo, 1952. It is interesting to note that Ibn Hanbal’s reply bears close resemblance to the answer given by Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq (‘a) to Mufazzal bin ‘Umar concerning this same hadith. Imam ‘Alī bin Musā al-Rizā (‘a) also

gave a similar reply to Ma'mun; refer to 'Allāmah Majlisī: Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 39, pp. 193-194, Dār al-Ihyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, Beirut. It is essential to know that according to many narrations, Imam 'Alī ('a) has stated: I am the distributor of heaven and hell", Bihār al-Anwār, vol. 39, p. 199.
[19] Ibn al-Jawzī, Manāqib al-Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal, p. 164.
[20] Bāghī is used to describe a person who on the basis of a wrong cause rebels against and fights the just leader. In the view of Imami scholars, such a bāghī is a kāfir. Refer to al-Miqdād bin 'Abdullāh al-Suyurī's Kanz al-'Irfān fī fiqh al-Qur'ān, edited by Muhammad Bāqir Behbudī, al-Maktabah al-Murtazawiyyah, vol. 1, p. 386, Tehran 1384 AH.
[21] For more details refer to Shaykh Muhammad Abu Zuhrah's book Ibn Hanbal: Hayātuhu wa 'Asruhu, Arā'uhu wa Fiqhuh, pp. 148-149.
[22] Muhammad Bāqir al-Musawī al-Khwansārī, Rawzāt al-Jannāt, vol. 1, p. 187, Maktabah Ismā'īliyān, Tehran, 1390 AH.
[23] Al-Tusī, Muhammad bin al-Hasan, al-Rijāl, p. 367, edited by Muhammad Sādiq Al-i Bahr al-'Ulum, 1st edition, Najaf, 1381/1961. Also refer to Sayyid Abu al-Qāsim al-Khu'ī: Mu'jam Rijāl al-Hadith, vol. 2, p. 260, 3rd edition, Dār al-Zahrā', Beirut, 1403/1983.
[24] Asad Haydar, al-Imam al-Sādiq wa al-Madhāhib al-Arba'ah, vol. 2, pp. 503-506, 2nd edition, Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, Beirut, 1392/1971. The author has listed the names of Ibn Hanbal's teachers, who according to him had Shi'ite tendencies, but a review of Shi'ite narrators in Sayyid al-Khu'ī's Mu'jam Rijāl al-Hadith shows that no hadith has been related from Ahmad bin Hanbal in authoritative Shi'ite books of hadith.
[25] Ustādī, Rizā, Musnad al-Rizā ('a) in 40 articles, p. 154, 1st edition, published by Kitāb-Khāneh Ayatullāh Mar'ashī Najafi, Qum, 1413/1371.

Admonition to Kinsmen and Nomination of Imam 'Alī ('a)

Ahmad bin Hanbal says:

> Aswad bin 'Amir has related to us from Sharīk from A'mash from Minhal from 'Abdullāh bin Asadi, that (Imam) 'Alī ('a) said:
>
> > When the āyah "And warn your relatives of nearest kin" (26:214) was revealed, the Prophet gathered his family around him and treated 30 of them to a meal and then said:
> >
> > > "Who is willing to guarantee my debts and commitments so that he should be with me in paradise and should be my successor from among my family."
>
> A person whom Shurayk did not name, answered:
>
> > O Messenger of Allah you are like a sea,[26] who can take charge of this responsibility.
>
> The Prophet repeated his statement to his relatives, and (Imam) 'Alī [('a)] replied:
>
> > "I will undertake this responsibility."[27]

Ahmad Muhammad Shākir the annotator of the Musnad has enumerated the isnād of this hadīth as hasan or fair. The same event has been narrated in greater detail in the words of Imam 'Alī ('a) in hadīth no. 1371 of the Musnad (vol. 2, pp. 352-353) and the annotator has termed its isnād as sahīh (authoritative).

Notes:
[26] Reference to the great generosity and munificence of the Prophet, Ahmad Shākir's explanation on the margins of this hadith.
[27] Ahmad bin Hanbal, al-Musnad, annotated by Ahmad Muhammad Shākir in 15 volumes, Dār al-Ma'ārif, Cairo, 1949-1958, hadith no. 883.

Hadith al-Manzilah

In 9 AH the Prophet prepared to march for the expedition against the Romans, and according to Shaykh Mufīd and Shaykh Tusī since he was concerned of the evil intentions of the enemies, he told Imam 'Alī ('a): "It is not advisable to leave Medina without me or you." He subsequently placed Imam 'Alī ('a) in charge of Medina before

departing for the expedition to Tabuk, and in order to quell the hypocrites' ill-speaking of his cousin, he said the latter's position to him was like that of Aaron to Prophet Moses ('a). This saying is known as Hadīth al-Manzilah and has been reported by all scholars. Ibn Hanbal has recorded it in the Musnad twenty times through different chains of isnād on the authority of several companions of the Prophet including Jābir bin 'Abdullāh al-Ansārī, Asmā' bint 'Umays, 'Abdullāh bin 'Abbās, Abī Sa'īd al-Khidrī and Sa'd bin Abī Waqqās.[28] The last named has related it ten times and one of the versions reads as follows:

> Abī Ahmad Zubayri quotes 'Abdullāh bin Habīb bin Abī Thābit from Hamzah bin 'Abdullāh from his father and from Sa'd (bin Abī Waqqās) who narrating this hadīth for us, said:
>
> > When the Messenger of Allah left Medina for Tabuk he placed (Imam) 'Alī [('a)] as his vicegerent in Medina. (Imam) 'Alī [('a)] asked the Prophet:
> >
> > > "Are you making me your vicegerent?"
> >
> > The Prophet replied:
> >
> > > "Are you not happy that your position to me is that of Aaron to Moses, except that there is no Prophet after me?"[29]

Ahmad Shākir has termed the isnād of this hadīth as fair.

Notes:
[28] Hamdī 'Abd al-Majīd al-Salafī, Murshid al-Muhtār, vol. 1, p. 239, 2nd edition, Beirut, 1407/1987.
[29] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 1600 (Ahmad Shākir).

Abū Bakr's Dismissal from leading the Hajj and the Entrustment to Imam 'Alī ('a) to Convey Surah al-Barā'ah

Ibn Hanbal says of the event which occurred in the month of Dhī al-Hijjah, 9 AH:

> Wakī' has related to us from Isrā'īl from Abī Ishāq from Zayd bin Yuthay' from Abū Bakr:
>
> > The Prophet sent him (Abū Bakr) with Surah al-Barā'ah to the people of Mecca (to proclaim) that after this year no polytheist will be allowed at the Hajj, neither should the nude circumambulate the Ka'bah, none will enter paradise except the person who has become Muslim, whoever has a pact between him and the Messenger of Allah it is valid until the specified period, and Allah and His Messenger are free from any obligation to the polytheists. After a while, he told (Imam) 'Alī [('a)], may Allah be pleased with him:
> >
> > > Overtake Abū Bakr and send him back to me and you proclaim (the Surah to the Meccans).
> >
> > (Imam) 'Alī [('a)] acted as per the instructions and when Abū Bakr returned to the Prophet he cried and said:
> >
> > > O Messenger of Allah, did anything happen?
> >
> > He replied:
> >
> > > Nothing has happened concerning you except good, but I have been commanded (by Allah) that these (commandments) should either be conveyed by my or by a man who is from me.[30]

Ahmad Shākir, the annotator of the Musnad has considered the isnād of this hadīth as sahīh (authoritative) and has said that Zayd bin Yuthay' was a trustworthy person of the first generation of Muslims after the Prophet and the name of his father has also been mentioned as Uthay'.

Habashī bin Junādah al-Sulukī who took part in the Farewell Pilgrimage of the Prophet, has recorded four hadīth with a similiar text in his own Musnad which confirms Ibn Hanbal's narration of the above hadīth. Habashī quotes Abū Bakr that the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

> 'Alī is from me and I am from him. My words will not be conveyed except by me or by 'Alī.[31]

Notes:
[30] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 4.
[31] Ibn Hanbal's Musnad published in 6 volumes by Matba'ah al-Maymaniyyah, vol. 4, pp. 164-165, 1st edition, Egypt, 1313 AH.

The Prophet's Declaration of Imam 'Alī's ('a) Vicegerency

Ahmad bin Hanbal says:

Burayrah (Aslamī) has related:

The Prophet (S) dispatched two regiments towards Yemen, one under the command of (Imam) 'Alī bin Abī Tālib [('a)] and the other led by Khālid bin Walīd with instructions that when the two regiments are with each other they should be under the sole command of (Imam) 'Alī [('a)], and when they are separate they will remain under different commanders. We the Muslim forces, encountered the Yemeni tribe of Banī Zayd and fought and defeated these infidels. When their men had died fighting, the families surrendered and from among the captives, (Imam) 'Alī [('a)] chose a maid for himself.

Burayrah continues:

Khālid bin Walīd sent me to the Prophet with a letter informing him of this matter. I submitted the letter to the Prophet and when he had read it I saw signs of anger appear on his face. I said:

O Messenger of Allah (S), you sent me with a man instructing me to obey him, and accordingly I performed whatever duty I was ordered to do.

The Messenger of Allah (S) said:

Lā taqa' fī 'Alīyyin fa innahu minnī wa ana minhu wa huwa waliyyukum ba'dī wa innahu minnī wa ana minhu wa huwa waliyyukum ba'dī (Don't try to find faults with 'Alī, he is indeed from me and I am from him, he is your leader after me. He is from me and I am from him, he is your leader after me).[32]

Notes:
[32] Ibn Hanbal's Musnad, vol. 5, 356, Matba'ah al-Maymaniyyah.

Hadith al-Thaqalayn

Ahmad bin Hanbal says:

Aswad bin 'Amir has related from Abī Isrā'īl, i.e. Ismā'īl bin Abī Ishāq Malaie, from 'Atiyyah from Abī Sa'īd who quotes the Prophet as saying:

"Innī tārikun fīkum al-thaqalayn, ahaduhumā akbaru min al-akhar, Kitaballāh hablun mamdudun min al-samā'-i ilā al-arz wa 'itratī Ahl-i Baytī, wa annahumā lan yaftaraqā hattā yaridā 'alayya al-hawz" (I am leaving among you two precious things, one of which is greater than the other. The Book of Allah which is the rope extending from the sky to the earth and my progeny my Ahl al-Bayt. And the two will never part with each other until they return to me at the pool (of kawthar in paradise).[33]

Notes:
[33] Ibid, vol. 3, p. 14. Hadith al-Thaqalayn has been recorded extensively in the Musnad, e.g. vol. 3, pp. 17, 26 & 59; vol. 4, p. 367; vol. 5, pp. 181, 189, 190.

Hadith al-Ghadir

Ahmad bin Hanbal says:

‘Abdullāh bin Ahmad relates from ‘Alī bin Hakīm Awdī from Sharīk from Abi Ishāq from Sa‘īd bin Wahab and Zayd bin Yuyhay‘ both of whom have narrated:

(Imam) ‘Alī [(‘a)] complained and addressed the people at Rahbah, saying:

“All those who had heard the Prophet’s words at Ghadīr Khum, stand up.”

The narrator says:

Six persons on behalf of Sa‘īd and six persons on behalf of Zayd stood up and bore testimony that they heared the Prophet say on the Day of Ghadīr:

“A laysa Allahu awlā bi al-mu’minīn? Qālu: Balā. Qāla: Allahumma man kuntu mawlāh fa ‘Alīyyun mawlāh. Allahumma wāli man wālāh wa ‘adi man ‘adāh (Is not God superior to the faithful?

Yes! said the gathering. He said:

O Allah! For whomsoever I am master ‘Alī is his master. O Allah! befriend his friends and despise his enemies)”.[34]

Ibn Hanbal has recorded the event of Ghadīr over 30 times in his Musnad through different isnād or chains of authority and in the words of more than 10 companions of the Prophet.[35] The version of Hadīth al-Ghadīr mentioned above is from the notes of Ibn Hanbal’s son ‘Abdullāh on his father’s work. Ahmad Shākir the annotator of the Musnad has described as sahīh the isnād of this hadīth and has said about Sa‘īd bin Wahab Khaywānī that he was among the trustworthy and experienced Muslims of the first generation after the Prophet.[36]

Notes:
[34] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 950 (Ahmad Shākir).
[35] Al-Salafī, Murshid al-Muhtār, vol. 3, pp. 156-157.
[36] Ahmad Shākir’s explanation on Hadith al-Ghadīr.

Preventing the Prophet from Writing the Will

Ahmad bin Hanbal says:

Wahab bin Jarīr has related from his father from Yunus from Zuharī from ‘Ubaydullāh that ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Abbās narrated a hadīth to us that the Prophet said in his last days:

“Come, I will write for you a text so that you will never go astray after me”.

Several persons including ‘Umar bin al-Khattāb were present and ‘Umar told the gathering:

Pain has prevailed upon the Prophet. The Qur’ān is with you and the Book of Allah is sufficient for us.

The gathering disputed with each other in this matter, with some repeating ‘Umar’s words and others telling him (‘Umar):

Hearken, so that the Prophet may write something for you.

Since voices were raised and disputes arose the Prophet felt distressed and told them firmly:

“Get up and leave my presence”.

Ibn ‘Abbās added:

The great tragedy is that, by their dispute and clamour, they prevented the Prophet from writing the will for them.[37]

Ahmad Shākir describing the isnād of this hadīth as sahīh,[38] writes: This hadīth has been repeated in this book (Musnad) in the same words or in a summarised form in several places.[39]

Notes:
[37] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 2992 (Ahmad Shākir)
[38] Refer to footnotes of the same hadith.
[39] Al-Musnad, hadith nos. 2676 & 31111; also refer to Musnad, Matba‘ah al-Maymaniyyah, vol. 3, p. 346 (Musnad Jābir bin ‘Abdullāh al-Ansārī).

Three Merits of Imam ‘Alī (‘a) in One Hadith

Ahmad bin Hanbal says:

Qutaybah bin Sa‘īd has related to us from Hātam bin Ismā‘īl from Bukayr bin Mismār from ‘Amir bin Sa‘d from his father (Sa‘d bin Abī Waqqās) who narrated the hadith that when the Prophet on leaving for a campaign asked (Imam) ‘Alī (‘a) to stay (behind in the city) in his place, the latter said:

“Are you leaving me with the women and children?”

I heard the Prophet reply to him:

“Yā ‘Alī amā tarzā ‘an takuna minnī bi manzilati Hārun min Musā illā annahu lā nabiyya ba‘dī (O ‘Alī! Are you not pleased that your position to me is similar to that of Aaron to Moses, except that prophethood will cease after me?).”

(Sa‘d bin Abī Waqqās says) I also heard (the Prophet say) on the Day of Khaybar:

“La-u‘tiyanna al-rāyah rajulan yuhibbu Allaha wa Rasulahu wa yuhibbuhu Allahu wa Rasuluh” (I will give the standard to the man who loves Allah and His Prophet and who is loved (in turn) by Allah and His Prophet).”

All of us raised our necks (to see). He said:

“Call ‘Alī to me.”

On hearing this instruction (Imam) ‘Alī [(‘a)] was brought to the Prophet with sore eyes. The Prophet rubbed his eyes with his saliva and gave him the standard and through his hands Allah conquered Khaybar for the Muslims. And when the ayah “Call our sons and your sons, and our women and your women and ourselves and yourselves” (3:61) was revealed, the Messenger of Allah called ‘Alī (‘a), Fātimah (‘a), Hasan (‘a) and Husayn (‘a) and said:

“Allahumma hāulā’i ahlī (O Allah these [persons] are my family).”[40]

The annotator of the Musnad considers the isnād of this hadith as sahīh (authoritative) and writes:

This hadith has also been recorded through Qutabyah on the same chain of authority by Muslim and Tirmidhi in their books. At the beginning of this hadith, it is mentioned in the two books (Sahīh Muslim and Sahīh Tirmidhi) that Mu‘āwiyah (bin Abī Sufyān) ordered Sa'd (bin Abi Waqqas) to curse (Imam) ‘Alī (‘a), saying:

What prevents you from cursing Abu Turab?

Sa'd replied:

“I remember three things which the Messenger of Allah said to (Imam) ‘Alī (‘a) and accordingly I will never curse him. If only one of these virtues was for me I would have considered it better than possessing red-haired camels.”

Then he related the three virtues (of Imam ‘Alī) for Mu‘āwiyah as said before.[41]

Notes:
[40] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 1608 (Ahmad Shākir).
[41] Muslim bin Hajjāj, al-Jāmi‘ al-Sahīh, vol. 2, pp. 236-237, Bulaq Press, Cairo, 1290 AH; Muhammad bin ‘Isā Tirmidhī: al-Sunan (al-Jāmi‘ al-Sahīh), vol. 4, pp. 329-330, printed in India, 1328.

The merits of Imam ‘Alī (‘a) According to Ibn ‘Abbas

Ahmad bin Hanbal says:

Yahyā bin Hammād has related to us from Abī ‘Awwānah from Abī Balj from ‘Amr bin Maymunah who narrated the hadith, saying:

“I was sitting with (‘Abdullāh) bin ‘Abbās when nine parties approached him and said:

Either get up and come with us or leave this place for us.

Ibn ‘Abbās who at that time had not yet lost his eyesight, answered:

I will come with you.

They conferred with him in slow tones and we did not understand what they spoke about. Ibn ‘Abbās then returned to his place and while shaking his clothes said:

Alas, alas! They are trying to fault with a man who has ten privileges (which he recounted as follows):

A. The Prophet (on the day of the conquest of Khaybar) said: “I will send the one whom God will never turn back distressed; he loves Allah and His Prophet.” Then he enquired: “Where is ‘Alī?” They answered that he was at home writhing in pain. He said: “May none of you be afflicted with pain.” Then ‘Alī came with his sore eyes in a state that he was almost unable to see a thing or the way. The Prophet blew his breath into his eyes and after shaking the standard thrice, handed it to ‘Alī, who returned victorious from this mission and brought with him (for the Prophet) Safiyyah bint Ibn Akhtab.[42]

B. The Prophet had sent someone (Abū Bakr) for conveying Surah al-Barā’ah (to the people of Mecca). Then he sent (Imam) ‘Alī (‘a) after him to take charge of the Surah and said: “This Surah should not be conveyed except by him who is from me and I am from him.”

C. He told his near of kin (children of ‘Abdul-Muttalib): “Who among you is ready to accept my wilāyah in this world and the hereafter?” They did not reply to him. ‘Alī (‘a) who was sitting near him said: “I am your friend in this world and the hereafter.” The Prophet said: “You are (indeed) my friend in this world and the hereafter.” The Prophet again turned to the gathering and asked: “Who among you will choose my friendship in the world and the hereafter?” They did not reply but ‘Alī said: “O Messenger of Allah! I choose your friendship in this world and hereafter.” He said: “You are certainly my friend in this world and the hereafter.”

D. He is the first one after Khadījah to practice the Muslim faith.

E. The Prophet raised his cloak and covering ‘Alī, Fātimah, Hasan and Husayn with it, said: “Indeed, Allah desires to remove uncleanness from you O Ahl al-Bayt and keep you pure as pure can be.” (Holy Qur’ān 33:33)

F. (Imam) ‘Alī sold (risked) his life, put on the Prophet’s clothes and slept in his place when the infidels (of Mecca) intended to make the Prophet the target of their malevolence. ‘Alī [(‘a)] was sleeping when Abū Bakr approached him thinking him to be the Prophet. (Imam) ‘Alī [(‘a)] told him: “The Prophet has gone towards the well of Maymun, go and join him.” Abū Bakr left and entered the Cave of Thaur with him. The infidels started pelting (Imam) ‘Alī [(‘a)] with stones (mistaking him to be the Prophet). He flexed

himself, writhed in pain but did not remove the cloth covering his head. Only with the break of dawn did he remove aside the cloth covering his head.

G. When the Prophet was leaving Medina with the people for the Tabuk expedition, (Imam) ‘Alī (‘a) asked him: “Am I not accompanying you?” The Prophet replied in the negative. (Imam) ‘Alī (‘a) sighed and the Prophet told him: “Are you not pleased that your position to me is similar to that of Aaron to Moses, except that you are not a Prophet? Is it not proper for me to leave and you should stay as my vicegerent?”

H. The Prophet told him: “After me you are the Master and Leader of all faithful people.”

I. The Prophet said: “Close all doors (of houses) leading into the Mosque (of Medina) except that of the house of ‘Alī.” As a result he could enter the mosque in any state, since except for this passage there was no other entrance to his house.

J. The Prophet said: “For whomsoever I am Master, ‘Alī is his Master.”[43]

Notes:
[42] The conquest of Khaybar by Imam ‘Alī (‘a) is among the widely related hadith. Ibn Hanbal has recorded this several times in his Musnad, e.g. refer to vol. 3, p. 116 and vol. 4, p. 52, al-Maymuniyyah print.
[43] We have mentioned this hadith in brief because of its length. For the full text refer to Musnad, hadith 3062 (Ahmad Shākir), and also hadith no. 3063 recorded through different isnād. Ahmad Shākir considers the isnād of both the hadith as sahīh.

The Canonical Meaning of Ahl al-Bayt (‘a)

Ibn Hanbal says:

A. Ahmad has related from Muhammad bin Mas‘ab from Awzā‘ī from Shaddād Abī ‘Ammār who narrates:

I approached Wāthilah bin Asqa‘ while a group of people was with him and were speaking about (Imam) ‘Alī [(‘a)]. When they got up and left, Wāthilah said:

Do you want me to inform you what I had seen of the Messenger of Allah (S).

I replied in the affirmative. Wathilah said:

I went to Fātimah [(‘a)] to enquire about (Imam) ‘Alī [(‘a)] and she said that he had gone to the Messenger of Allah (S). I waited for him to come and saw the Messenger of Allah (S) approaching with ‘Alī, Hasan and Husayn. The Prophet entered with Hasan and Husayn holding either of his hands, and he went near to ‘Alī and Fātimah and made them sit on their knees in front of him and Hasan and Husayn. Then he covered them with his cloak and recited this ayah:

“Indeed, Allah desires to remove uncleanness from you O Ahl al-Bayt and keep you pure as pure can be.” (Holy Qur’ān 33:33)

Then he said:

“Allāhumma hāulā’i Ahlu Bayti wa Ahlu Bayti ahaqq (O Allah these the people of my house and the people of my house are [certainly] most meritorious).”[44]

B. Aswad bin ‘Amir has related to us from Hammād bin Salamah from ‘Alī bin Zayd from Anas bin Mālik who narrates that for six months every morning when the Prophet came out (of his house), he would pass by the doorstop of Fātimah’s house and say:

“To prayer O Ahl al-Bayt, Indeed, Allah desires to remove uncleanness from you O Ahl al-Bayt and keep you pure as pure can be.”[45]

The above description reveals that the word Ahl al-Bayt in the context of this ayah is a canonical term established by the Holy Qur’ān and elucidated by the Prophet who determined the identity of this group. The Prophet by

gathering his daughter Fātimah (ʻa), her husband Imam ʻAlī (ʻa) and the couple's two sons Imam Hasan (ʻa) and Imam Husayn (ʻa) under his cloak and reciting this ayah which was revealed in praise of this group, made it clear that who actually are the Ahl al-Bayt and who are not included in the concept of this ayah.[46]

An interesting point to note here is that although Ibn Hanbal's narrations of the above ahādīth have made clear the concept of the Ahl al-Bayt in Ayah al-Tathīr (Verse of Purity), he has recorded under the section Musnad Ahl al-Bayt several hadith not only from Imam Hasan and Imam Husayn (ʻa) but from their uncles ʻAqīl bin Abī Tālib and Jaʻfar bin Abī Tālib as well as from their cousin ʻAbdullāh bin Jaʻfar.[47] It is worth noting that the last three persons, despite being the meritorious scions of the Prophet's clan, the Banī Hashim, are not members of the Ahl al-Bayt in view of the canonical term of the Qur'ānic ayah. This slip on the part of Ibn Hanbal can be explained by the ahādīth concerning Imam ʻAlī (ʻa) which he has included in the so-called group ʻAsharah al-Mubashshirah and also mixed up ahādīth on the merits of Hazrat Fātimah al-Zahrā' (ʻa) in the section titled Musnad al-Nisā'.[48]

Notes:
[44] Musnad, vol. 4, p. 107 (Musnad Wāthilah bin Asqaʻ), Matbaʻah al-Maymaniyyah; also refer to vol. 6, pp. 292, 298, 304, 323 (Musnad Umm-i Salamah).
[45] Ibid, vol. 3, p. 259 (Musnad Anas bin Mālik); also refer to vol. 3, p. 286.
[46] On the identity of the Ahl al-Bayt.
[47] Al-Musnad, vol. 3, pp. 167, 199 (Ahmad Shākir)
[48] For hadith on Hazrat Fātimah al-Zahrā' (ʻa) refer to al-Musnad, vol. 6, p. 282, Matbaʻah al-Maymaniyyah.

Friendship with the Ahl al-Bayt (ʻa)

Ibn Hanbal says:

A. Ahmad has related from Ibn Numayr from Aʻmash from ʻAdiyy bin Thābit from Zirr bin Husbaish from (Imam) ʻAlī [(ʻa)] who narrates:

By Allah! One of the covenants which the Messenger of Allah (S) bound me with is this:

"None will bear enmity towards me but the hypocrite and none will love me but the faithful believer."[49]

Ahmad Shākir regards the isnād of this hadith as sahīh and says about ʻAdiyy bin Thābit al-Ansārī al-Kufī:

He was one of the trustworthy persons of the first generation of Muslims after the Prophet and his being a Shīʻah does not affect his narrations since he was trustworthy and truthful.

B. ʻAbdullāh bin Ahmad has recorded: Nasr bin ʻAlī Azdī narrates from ʻAlī bin Jaʻfar from his brother (Imam) Musā bin Jaʻfar [(ʻa)] from his father (Imam) Jaʻfar bin Muhammad (al-Sadiq) from his father (Muhammad bin ʻAlī al-Bāqir), and he from (his father Imam) ʻAlī bin al-Husayn [(ʻa)], who from his father (Imam Husayn), and grandfather (Imam ʻAlī), who narrates the hadith that the Messenger of Allah (S) holding the hands of Hasan and Husayn said:

"Man ahabbanī wa ahabba hadhayn wa abāhumā wa ummahumā kāna maʻī fī darajatī yawm al-qiyāmah" (Anyone who loves me and these two and their father and mother will be with me and on my station on the Day of Resurrection).[50]

Ahmad Shākir considers the isnād of this hadith as sahīh. It is also worth noting that when Nasr bin ʻAlī Azdī narrated this hadith he was subjected to 1000 whiplashes on the orders of the ʻAbbāsid caliph al-Mutawakkil.[51]

C. Abu Ahmad (Muhammad bin ʻAbdullāh bin Zubayr Asadī) has related to us from Sufyān (Thawrī) from Abī Jihāf from Abi Hāzim from Abī Hurayrah who quotes a hadith from the Messenger of Allah (S), saying:

"Man ahabbahumā faqad ahabbanī wa man abghazahumā faqad abghazanī, yaʻnī Hasanan wa Husaynan" (Anyone who loves them, I mean Hasan and Husayn, indeed loves me, and anyone who hates them, surely hates me).[52]

Ahmad Shākir considers the isnād of this hadith as sahīh.

Notes:
[49] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 642 (Ahmad Shākir). This hadith has been recorded through a slightly different chain of authority (isnād) on pages 102 & 236 of the same book.
[50] Ibid, hadith no. 576. This hadith has been added by Ibn Hanbal's son 'Abdullāh.
[51] Ibn Hajar 'Asqalānī, Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb, vol. 1, p. 430, printed by Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyyah, Haiderabad Deccan (India).
[52] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 7863 (Ahmad Shākir); also refer to hadith nos. 6406 & 7392 of the same edition.

Imam 'Alī's ('a) Comparison with Prophet Jesus ('a)

Ibn Hanbal says:

'Abdullāh bin Ahmad has related to us from Abu al-Harth Surayj bin Yunus from Abu Hafs Abbār from Hakam bin 'Abd al-Malik from Harth bin Hasīrah from Abī Sādiq from Rabī'ah bin Nājidh from (Imam) 'Alī ('a), who narrates:

The Messenger of Allah (S) told me:

"Fīka mathalun min 'Isā, abghazathu al-Yahud hattā bahatu ummahu, wa ahabbathu al-Nasārā hattā anzaluhu bi al-manzilati allatī laysa bih (You are like Jesus. The Jews hated him so much that they slandered his mother, and the Christians because of their extreme devotion to him placed him in a position which was not his."

Then (Imam) 'Alī ('a) said:

"Yuhliku fiyya rajulān, muhibbun mufritun yuqarrizunī bi ma laysa fiyya, wa mubghizun yahmiluhu shan'ānī 'alā an yabhatanī (Two persons [groups] are doomed concerning me; the devoted extremist exalting me to what I am not, and the spiteful hater bearing malice towards me and slandering me).[53]

The annotator of the Musnad considers the isnād of this hadith as hasan (fair).

Notes:
[53] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 1376 and also hadith no. 1377 with a slight variation in its text and a different chain of authority (Ahmad Shākir).

Sadaqah Forbidden to the Prophet's Progeny

Ibn Hanbal says:

Muhammad bin Ja'far has related from Shu'bah from Burayd bin Abī Maryam from Abi Hawrā' who narrates the hadith that he told (Imam) Hasan bin 'Alī ('a):

"What memories do you have of (your grandfather) the Messenger of Allah (S)."

He replied:

"I remember that once when I picked up a date from the dates that were part of zakāt and placed it in my mouth, the Messenger of Allah (S) pulled it out of my mouth together with the saliva around it and threw it among the rest of the dates. He was asked (by his companions):

O Messenger of Allah (S)! What would have happened if you had not taken from the child this one date?

He replied:

Inna Al-a Muhammad la tahillu lanā al-sadaqah...(For us the progeny of Muhammad, sadaqah [alms] is not permissible)."[54]

According to Ahmad Shākir the isnād of this hadith are sahīh. This hadith with slight variation in its text or chain of authority has been repeated over fifteen times in the Musnad.[55]

Notes:
[54] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 1727 (Ahmad Shākir)
[55] Among these mention could be made of Hadith nos. 1723, 1725, 1731, & 7744 of Musnad. Also refer to al-Salafī: Murshid al-Muhtār, vol. 1, p. 177 for similar hadith.

Imam 'Alī ('a) will Fight for Interpretation of the Qur'ān

Ibn Hanbal says:

Wakī' has related to us from Fitr from Ismā'īl bin Rajā' from his father from Abi Sa'īd who narrates that the Messenger of Allah (S) said (addressing his companions):

"Inna minkum man yuqātilu 'alā ta'wīlih kamā qātaltu 'ala tanzīlih" (Who among you will fight for the interpretation [of the Qur'ān] as I fought on its revelation)?

Abi Sa'īd says:

At this Abū Bakr and 'Umar got up but the Messenger of Allah (S) said:

"lā, wa lākin khāsif al-na'l (No [not you] but the one who is busy mending the shoe)."

(Abī Sa'īd adds):

Wa 'Alīyun yakhsifu na'lahu (And [Imam] 'Alī [('a)] was mending his shoes.[56]

It is recorded that during the Battle of Siffīn the Prophet's loyal companion 'Ammar bin Yāsir who was on the side of Imam 'Alī ('a), referred to this famous hadith of the Prophet in favour of Imam 'Alī ('a) while facing the Syrian army of the rebel Mu'āwiyah bin Abī Sufyān, and recited the following epic verses (rajaz):

Nahnu darabnākum 'alā tanzīlih
Wa al-yawm nadribukum 'alā ta'wīlih
(We had fought you on the revelation [of the Qur'ān] and today we are fighting you on its correct interpretation).[57]

Notes:
[56] Al-Musnad, Matba'ah al-Maymaniyyah, vol. 3, pp. 31 & 33; also refer to p. 82 of the same volume where the hadith says Imam 'Alī ('a) was mending the Prophet's shoes.
[57] Tāhā Husayn, al-Fitnah al-Kubrā ('Alī and Prophethood), vol. 2, p. 77, 6th edition, Dār al-Ma'ārif, Egypt, 1969.

Ammār would be Killed by Transgressors

Ibn Hanbal says:

Abu Mu'āwiyah has related to us from A'mash from 'Abd al-Rahmān bin Ziyād who quotes 'Abdullāh bin Harth as saying:

I was with Mu'āwiyah (ibn Abī Sufyān) when he was returning from (the Battle of) Siffīn and I was riding between him and 'Amr bin 'As, when 'Abdullāh the son of 'Amr bin 'As said:

Don't you remember the Messenger of Allah had told 'Ammār

"Waihaka yā ibn al-Sumayyah, taqtuluka al-fi'ah al-bāghiyah (Bravo O son of Sumayyah! You will be killed by a group of transgressors)."

‘Amr bin ‘As turned to Mu‘āwiyah and said:

Did you not hear what he says?

Mu‘āwiyah replied:

You find fault with us! Did we kill him? Those who brought him here are responsible for his death![58]

This hadith has been recorded over twenty times in the Musnad on the authority of eight companions of the Prophet with variations in its text.[59] Ahmad Shākir considers this hadith not only sahīh but mutawātir (regularly transmitted throughout the first three generations of Muslims by a large number of transmitters) and says that scholars have never doubted its veracity. Explaining the word hannahu (finding fault) as used by Mu‘āwiyah, he writes:

It is clear that Mu‘āwiyah is not disputing this hadith but is censurng ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Amr (bin ‘As) for remembering it in this situation (when ‘Ammār has been killed by his troops), since he fears that if his army knows that he is on the wrong track they would desert him. In view of this fact, Mu‘āwiyah was trying to misinterpret and give a wrong connotation to this hadith by saying that the killers of ‘Ammār are those that brought him to the battlefield.

Ahmad Shākir, quoting Ibn Hajar ‘Asqalānī’s comments in Fath al-Bārī fī Tafsīr Sahīh al-Bukhārī (vol. 1, p. 452), further writes:

This hadith has been related by several companions of the Prophet including Qatādah bin Nu‘mān, Umm Salamah, Abī Hurayrah, ‘Abdullāh bin ‘Amr bin ‘As, ‘Uthmān bin ‘Affān, Hudhayfah al-Yamānī, Abu Ayyub al-Ansārī, Abu Rāfi‘, Khuzaymah bin Thābit, Mu‘āwiyah, ‘Amr bin ‘As, Abu al-Yasar and ‘Ammār bin Yāsir himself. This hadith is a firm proof of the virtues of (Imam) ‘Alī [(‘a)] and ‘Ammār and their standing with the Prophet. It is also a fitting reply to the enemies of (Imam) ‘Alī (nawāsib pl. of nāsib) who accuse him of error in his wars (during his caliphate).[60]

Notes:
[58] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 6499 (Ahmad Shākir).
[59] Also refer to hadith nos. 6500, 6926, 6927. For other instances of its recording in the Musnad refer to al-Salafī: Murshid al-Muhtār, vol. 2, p. 39. For details on the Prophet’s prophecy and ‘Ammar’s martyrdom refer to Muhammad bin Jarīr al-Tabarī: Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk, vol. 5, pp. 38 to 42, annotated by Muhammad Abu al-Fazl Ibrahīm, 2nd edition, Dār al-Ma‘ārif, Egypt, 1971.
[60] Al-Musnad, hadith nos. 209, 210.

Prophecy of the Martyrdom of Imam Husayn (‘a)

Ibn Hanbal says:

Muhammad bin ‘Ubayd has related to us from Sharhabīl bin Madrak from ‘Abdullāh bin Nujayy from his father who narrates that he was marching with (Imam) ‘Alī [(‘a)] towards Siffīn and when we reached Ninevah, (Imam) ‘Alī [(‘a)] cried in a loud voice:

“O Abā ‘Abdillāh! Be patient. O Abā ‘Abdillāh! Be patient beside the River Euphrates.”

I asked him:

For what?

He said:

“Once when I went to the Prophet I saw tears in his eyes and asked him:

O Messenger of Allah (S) who has made you upset? Why are your eyes moist with tears?

He said:

Bal qāma min ‘indī Jibra’īlu qabl, fahaddathanī anna al-Husayn yuqtulu bishatt al-Furāt. Qāla: Hal laka an ushimaka min turbatih? Qāla: Qultu: Na‘am. Famadda yadahu faqabaza qabzatan min turābin fa a‘tānīhā. falam amliku ‘aynī an fāzatā (A while ago [the Archangel] Gabriel left. He has informed me that indeed Husayn will be killed beside the River Euphrates.

Then he [the Prophet] said:

Do you like to smell part of his soil [where Imam Husayn (‘a) will be killed].

I said:

Yes.

He stretched his hand and taking a fistful of soil gave it to me. As a result, tears started rolling down uncontrollably from my eyes.)”[61]

The annotator of the Musnad regards the isnād of this hadith as sahīh and writes that Nujayy is not the only one to narrate this from Imam ‘Alī (‘a).

Notes:
[61] Ibid, hadith no. 6480 (Ahmad Shākir).

The Number of the Prophet’s Righteous Successors

Ibn Hanbal says:

A. Hasan bin Musā has related to us from Hammād bin Zayd from Mujālid from Sha‘bī from Masruq who says that in Kufa ‘Abdullāh bin Mas‘ud was giving us lessons from the Holy Qur’ān when a person asked:

O Abā ‘Abd al-Rahmān! Did you not ask the Prophet how many caliphs would this ummah have?

‘Abdullāh bin Mas‘ud said:

Since my coming to Iraq no one has posed me this question so far except you.

Then he added:

Yes! We did ask the Messenger of Allah (S) about this matter and he said:

“Ithnā-‘Ashara ka ‘iddati nuqabā’ Banī Isrā’īl (Twelve, equal to the number of the Chieftans of Banī Isrā’īl).”[62]

The isnād of this hadith are sahīh according to Ahmad Shākir.

Ibn Hanbal says:

B. Sufyān bin ‘Uyaynah has related to us from ‘Abd al-Malik bin ‘Umayr from Jābir bin Samrah al-Suwā’ī who narrates that he heard the Messenger of Allah (S) say:

“Lā yazāl hādha al-amr māziyan hattā yaqum ithnā-‘ashara amīran (This affair [religion] will continue until twelve leaders [Amīr] will rise).”

Then he mentioned something which I did not hear, so I asked my father (who was sitting beside me), who said:

“All of whom will be from the Quraysh.”[63]

This hadith has been recorded over 40 times in Ibn Hanbal's Musnad[64] and in some versions the word Khalīfah is found instead of Amir.[65] The version which I have selected here has the shortest chain of authority and reaches the Prophet through the medium of three narrators. Sunni scholars and exegetes of hadith have rather been perplexed and come up with unconvincing comments in their explanation of this particular hadith of the Prophet. They have been unable to reconcile with their beliefs the meaning of the figure of "twelve caliphs" as used by the Prophet. As a result we find conflicting and self-contradictory answers in their explanations.[66]

Notes:
[62] Ibid, hadith no. 3781. Refer to Holy Qur'ān (5:12) regarding the Nuqabā' (Chieftans) of Banī Isrā'īl.
[63] Al-Musnad, vol. 5, p. 101. Also refer to al-Safārīnī, Shams al-Dīn Muhammad: Sharh Thulāthiyyāt Ahmad, vol. 1, p. 539, first edition, 1380, Damascus.
[64] Al-Salafī, Murshad al-Muhtār, vol. 3, p. 380.
[65] E.g. refer to Musnad, al-Maymaniyyah print.
[66] For more information on the views of the Sunnis refer to al-Safārīnī: Sharh Thulāthiyyāt Ahmad, vol. 2, pp. 540-566. Also see al-'Askarī, Sayyid Murtazā: Naqsh-e A'immah dar Ihyā'-e Dīn, vol. 11, pp. 74-84.

The Uprising of the Mahdī ('a)

Ibn Hanbal says:

A. Hajjāj and Abu Na'īm have related from Fitr from Qāsim bin Abī Bazzah from Abī al-Tufayl from (Imam) 'Alī [('a)], who quoted the Messenger of Allah (S) as saying:

Law lam yabqa mina al-dunyā illā yawmun laba'atha Allahu rajulan minnā yamla'uhā 'adlan kamā muli'at jawran (If only a day were to remain for the end of the world, Allah will raise a man from my progeny who will fill it [the earth] with justice as it was filled with oppression)"[67]

Ibn Hanbal says:

B. Fazl bin Dukayn has related to us from Yāsīn al-'Ijlī from Ibrāhīm bin Muhammad bin Hanafiyyah from his father (Imam) 'Alī [('a)], who quoted the Messenger of Allah (S) as saying:

"al-Mahdī minnā Ahla al-Bayt yuslihuhu Allahu fī laylatin (The Mahdī is from us the Ahl al-Bayt, Allah will set right his affairs in [the course of] one night)."[68]

Ibn Hanbal says:

C. Sufyān bin 'Uyaynah has related to us from 'Asim (bin Abī al-Najud) from Zirr (bin Hubaysh) from 'Abdullāh (bin Mas'ud) who narrates from the Messenger of Allah (S):

"Lā taqum al-sā'ah hattā yalia rajulan min Ahli Baytī yuwātiu ismuhu ismī (The Day of Resurrection will not come until a man who is from my Ahl Bayt and whose name is my name, will rise)."[69]

Ahmad Shākir has termed the isnād of all three hadith as sahīh, and has criticised the North African scholar 'Abd al-Rahmān bin Muhammad bin Khaldun (1332-1406) for rejecting the reports concerning the Mahdī ('a). It is worth noting that Ibn Khaldun in his famous Muqaddimah or Introduction to History has embarked on a lengthy discussion on the ahādīth concerning the Mahdī ('a), and writes:

It has been well known (and generally accepted) by all Muslims in every epoch, that at the end of time a man from the Ahl al-Bayt (of the Prophet) will without fail make his appearance, one who will strengthen the religion and make justice triumph. The Muslims will follow him, and he will gain domination over the Muslim realm. He will be called the Mahdī...Evidence for this matter has been found in the ahādīth that religious leaders have published. They have been discussed by those who disapprove of (the matter) and have often been refuted by means of certain (other) akhbār.[70]

Ibn Khaldun in his discussion on the ahādīth concerning the Mahdī ('a) says that those who reject the coming of the Mahdī have criticised these reports, which he acknowledges have been narrated on the authority of some of the prominent companions of the Prophet and have been recorded in all authoritative Sunni books, whose names he has mentioned.

He writes:

> Hadith scholars acknowledge negative criticism to have precedence over positive criticism. If we find that some person in the chain of transmitters is accused of negligence, poor memory, weakness or poor judgement, it affects and weakens the soundness of the hadith. It should not be said that the same faults often affect the persons (mentioned as authorities) in the two Sahīhs (Bukhārī and Muslim). The general consensus of hadith transmitters confirms the soundness of the contents (of the two Sahīhs) as presented by Bukhārī and Muslim. The uninterrupted general consensus in Islam also confirms the acceptibility of (the two Sahīhs) and the necessity of acting in accordance with their contents. General consensus is the best protection and defence. Works other than the two Sahīhs are not on the same level with them in this respect...[71]

He goes on to quote, one after another, several of the ahādīth from the Prophet concerning the Mahdī (‘a), along with the chain of transmitters as found in the orginal sources, and tries to find fault with them in a manner which is clearly artificial. One of the ahādīth which he criticises is the narration that Ibn Hanbal has recorded on the authority of ‘Abdullāh bin Mas‘ud. Ibn Khaldun then directs his attack at ‘Asim bin Abī al-Najud even after acknowledging him to be “one of the seven authoritative Qur’ān readers.”[72] To deflect criticism from his assumption, he writes:

> Were someone to argue that (Bukhārī and Muslim) published traditions of his, (we should reply that) they published them when there were also other (authorities for the same tradition), and that they did not use him as their basic authority.[73]

The annotator of the Musnad, Ahmad Muhammad Shākir, finds the criticism of Ibn Khaldun unconvincing and rejecting it, writes:

> Ibn Khaldun attempted something for which he was not qualified and ventured into an arena which was not his domain. His preoccupation with state and political affairs and his serving of kings and nobles dominated his thought and speech, and as a result induced him to imagine that the report of the uprising and revolution of the Mahdī [(‘a)], was a (purely) Shi‘ite belief. However, it is worth noting that first Ibn Khaldun has not properly understood the statements of hadith compilers that negative criticism (jarh) takes precedence over positive criticism (ta‘dīl). If he had properly understood their statements he would not have commented in this manner. It is also possible that he understood their purpose but since his thoughts were profoundly influenced by the political views of his times, he has tried to weaken the ahādīth concerning the Mahdī (‘a).
>
> Second, ‘Asim bin Abī al-Najud is considered one of the reputed reciters of the Holy Qur’ān and is also regarded as a trustworthy transmitter of hadith. Maybe he has made mistakes in some ahādīth but these are not to the extent that his narration should be rejected. The strongest criticism against him is that he was not of good memory. But on the basis of such a single criticism, could we ignore him and consider this as a means of rejecting a report whose authenticity has been confirmed through various other chains and narrated in the words of several companions (of the Prophet)? The soundness of this report is to the extent that no one has any doubts about it, because among the transmitters could be seen just, truthful and candid persons. Moreover, since this hadith has been narrated by other transmitters as well, the likelihood of a slip concerning someone whose memory being sharp is somewhat under doubt, is completely eliminated.[74]

These were some of the examples of the large number of hadith concerning the virtues of the Prophet’s Ahl al-Bayt (‘a) found in the Musnad of Ahmad bin Hanbal. The writer of the article had to limit his selection in view of the space. It is hoped that this article would serve the purpose of bridging the gap between the Muslims and promote better understanding of each other.

Notes:
[67] Al-Musnad, hadith no. 773.
[68] Ibid, hadith no. 645.
[69] Ibid, hadith no. 3571. There are several other hadith in the Musnad concerning the uprising of the Mahdī (‘a), e.g. hadith nos. 3572, 3573, 4098, 4279 etc. Most of the isnād of these ahadith have been confirmed as sahīh.
[70] Ibn Khaldun, al-Muqaddimah, translated by Franz Rosenthal, vol. 2, pp. 156-157, published by Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1986.
[71] Ibid, vol. 2, p. 158.
[72] Ibid, vol. 2, p. 159.
[73] Ibid, vol. 2, p. 162.
[74] Shākir, Sharh al-Musnad, vol. 5, pp. 197-198.